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ABSTRACT

Educational Testing Service studied the Servicemen's Opportunity College (SOC) Program at nine different military installations and their surrounding SOC colleges. Members of the Armed Forces (stratified by sex, age, years in service, and rank) were interviewed regarding their educational background, decision to enter the service, reasons for going to school, and problems they encountered in returning to school. Problems usually involved lack of study time, scheduling difficulties, and difficulty in obtaining transcripts from all schools attended. In spite of these difficulties, however, many service people are attending courses to further their education. Many subjects had recommendations for improvement of the program such as allowing time off for those attending classes and improved information dissemination about the SOC. As a result of SOC participation, many colleges have effected changes in educational policy involving residency requirements, CLEP examinations, and restructuring of course length, thus making it easier for the geographically mobile service members to secure an education. Many have decided to reenlist to take advantage of this educational opportunity. SOC has apparently been successful as evidenced by those persons interviewed. (SM)

ED 099422

RM-74-14

# RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

## THE SERVICEMEN'S OPPORTUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAM: AN EVALUATION

Patricia Lund Casserly

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This Research Memorandum, the report of one phase of a three phase study, is a slightly modified version of a chapter included in a larger report prepared for Dr. James Nickerson of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities under the direction of Dr. David Nolan of Educational Testing Service, Washington, D. C., in May 1974.

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Educational Testing Service
Princeton, New Jersey
August 1974

The Servicemen's Opportunity College Program: An Evaluation

# I

# INTRODUCTION

"Want a college education but don't think you can afford one?"

"We'll pay up to three-fourths of your tuition and the base education office will provide you with guidance and academic counselling.... The day you complete basic training you will receive six semester hours credit for the physical education, health and first aid courses you will have completed. From there you can build your own program. You can have the results of other completed courses sent to a central respository maintained by the service which will issue you a transcript that you can take with you anywhere in the world, and when you leave the service, it is something you can show to college representatives, registrars, potential employers and civilian associations as evidence of your military and academic training and experience."

This year, hundreds of thousands of high school seniors have been deluged with materials from each of the armed services that, in effect, promise, at the very least, "life-time skills," and in addition AAs, ASs, ABs, BSs, MAs, MSs, and PhDs to "qualified volunteers" who are willing to invest from two to six years of their lives in attaining their educational goals and at the same time "fulfill their military obligation," or in the words of another service, "their obligation to their country."

It was to fulfill its obligation to defend our country, and "to provide the opportunity for everyone...to rise to as high a level of responsibility as possible, dependent only on individual talent and diligence," that the Department of Defense, in consort with a number of Higher Education Associations, developed the Servicemen's Opportunity College Program.

During the better part of the last 10 weeks, two members of the ETS staff have traveled to ten major military complexes and to a number of community or junior colleges and four year or upper division colleges and

universities that service them (and other bases as well). With one exception, these colleges had been accepted for membership in SOC although at several campuses we were the harbingers of the good news. During our visits we interviewed a wide spectrum of military personnel, Education Service Officers (both civilian and military), and other education and career counselors as well as college administrators and faculty members who are involved in the program. (See Appendix.)

Our charges were several: to see if the SOC concept had become a working reality, to identify problems and, where possible, to suggest solutions for them in order to strengthen the program and to aid other not-yet-participating colleges in serving a most important segment of our population. Our last and equally important task was to inquire about and make preliminary assessment of the effects of the SOC program on general college policies and practices that affect the greater civilian population.

Because of the limitations of both time and money, the nine sites (a military installation surrounded by at least two SOC colleges) were chosen by the ETS director of the project and his staff in consultation with representatives of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines at a meeting at the Pentagon in January. These representatives from DOD later arranged for our visits to their respective installations. Visits to colleges were to a great extent arranged by the two SOC sponsors, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. At each site, the first day was usually spent at the base or post, talking with the ESOs, education advisors, representatives of colleges who happened to be available, and at least six service persons who were enrolled in courses offered by participating SOC colleges. We had suggested that at

each base we would like to interview a diverse group of students, i.e., that members of the sample differ in chronological age, time in the military, rank, educational background, and progress toward the degree. The ESOs did an excellent job of fulfilling our request.

Our schedules on base were usually expanded to include a "10 minute courtesy call" on the base commanding officer or his representative, which in several cases stretched to an hour or two of discussion of the problems of that particular base or post, and of their particular service and mission. These meetings were invaluable in understanding the problems faced by students, colleges and ESOs connected with those bases.

On each of the two succeeding days, we visited a two-year or senior college servicing the complex. At the colleges we tried to see several members of the SOC advisory council which usually included an academic dean, and representatives from the admissions and registrar's offices, as well as a liaison person with the military base and/or a veterans' advisor. Where it was possible we also tried to interview at least two professors who taught on base to inquire into special problems and special strengths of this group of students.

Usually under the aegis of either college representatives or base ESOs, at some point in our three day visits, we also toured base educational facilities, classrooms, learning centers, libraries and study areas, and managed to talk, all too briefly, with base and post librarians, remedial teachers, and, on several occasions, were able to sit in on classes as well. We welcomed these opportunities whenever they presented themselves because we felt it desirable to learn about the SOC program in the widest possible context of the military's commitment to provide educational opportunities for each of its members according to his mission, aptitudes, and aspirations.

What follows is a report of our observations at both military installations and colleges. Constraint of time made it impossible to select a sample that could be described as representative of all such institutions. Thus, the observations must be viewed within the limited sample available.

# II

## THE STUDENTS

The men and women who are and will be in the Armed Forces are the most important part of the SOC program. They are whom it must ultimately serve and serve well if the Armed Forces are to attract, develop and retain the kinds of individuals that will make the all-voluntary system a viable reality. Therefore, in this chapter we shall let the students we interviewed speak for themselves and tell us through a number of their representatives about the experience of combining college work with military life.

First of all, who were they? They were truly more of a cross-section of the Armed Forces (and the larger society) than we had dared hope, although at any one installation several in the sample may have been of near equal rank or have been performing similar or related duties. By the time we completed our travels we had talked with young ladies about to be veterans at 22; seasoned chief petty officers with 20 years of almost continuous sea duty; master sergeants, including members of the elite Master Sergeants Academy at Fort Bliss; instructors in the Special Forces (Green Berets); privates through colonels and yeomen through lieutenant commanders; Peruvian and Australian nationals; Cajuns, Mexicans, Granadans, and Phillipine Americans; rural Blacks and Whites--and the urban poor--seventh and ninth grade dropouts, high school graduates, and the unfinished products of the nation's least and most prestigious colleges.

Briefly, our interviews were conducted in the following manner--we offered them coffee (when possible) and explained our mission in a variation of the following:

"I am here at the request of (their branch of the Armed Forces), the Department of Defense, the AACJC and the AAofSCU, which are associations of colleges, to see how effective their efforts are in providing you with opportunities to enable you to fulfill your educational and vocational goals." (We offered further explanations of our mission when necessary and also encouraged them to speak frankly, assuring them of the confidentiality of our conversation.) Then we encouraged them, "So, will you please take a few minutes to tell me about yourself--you know, things like _____, _____, _____, (the sequence varied).

(1) Why you decided to enter the service.

(2) About your educational background at that time.

(3) What your experience in educational programs leading up to college has been.

(4) What propelled you (back) to college?

(5) Have you encountered any problems in doing this and what were they?

(6) Do you plan to reenlist and/or make the military a career (as appropriate)?

(7) If you were in command (of the post or base or unit, as appropriate), what would you do to make it easier for people like yourself to get the education they want? If you were "running the show," what would you do?

Brief but typical answers to each of the seven major questions are as follows:

Question 1: Why you decided to enter the service.

"I had no choice, they wanted me!"

"It was this or jail."

"Wanted to see the world."

"To get away from home."

"An unhappy love affair."

"Hated school."

"Had no skills."

"Couldn't find a job."

"Knew I was wasting time and my parents' money in college."

"Had no direction--needed the discipline."

"Wanted to improve myself."

These are the same answers that an ancient census taker would have received had he been sent out to Gaul with Caesar's legions and asked to report to the Roman Senate. But, among a significant number of those with three or less years in the military, the answer was, "I wanted an education and I got this letter." (or) "The recruiter promised me the opportunity...." The important point here is that, whether ex-juvenile delinquent, jilted lover, ex-campus jock or recent high school graduate, all these men and women (with an age span of three decades) are now enrolled in higher education.

Question 2: About your educational background at that time.

Seventh grade through college graduate.

Question 3: What your experience in educational programs leading up to college has been.

"I was interested in electronics so they made me a baker and I want to cross-train and get back into electronics."

"I've taken every course (technical, USAFI, or whatever) I could... and finished my GED, then my AA--have almost got my BA and will start the MBA program in the fall."

"I have a transcript that runs on for pages and covers 20 years. I could never hope to get it all together before; had no hope for a degree. Eventually, I hope for a doctorate."

Question 4: What propelled you (back) to college?

"I heard about the (SOC) program from my ESO (or C/O or buddy) and decided to investigate."

"I was bored."

"Cajoled."

"Pushed."

"Threatened--now with the new regulations, it's up or out."

"I found I wasn't so dumb after a few courses that were required for my MOS, and my CO said, '_____, you'd better go to the education office and see about getting your GED.' Every few days he'd say, 'Been over there yet?' I got so sick of his asking that I went to get him off my back. And I met Miss _____ and she talked to me a while and before I knew it I was taking the test that afternoon and I passed! I couldn't believe it! And when I was 'high' on that, she talked me into agreeing to come back and take some of the CLEP the next afternoon. And I did and passed everything but the math and a week later she called me in and said, 'O.K., _____, I've talked with (the local community college) and you now have 24 hours of college credit, so why don't you go over there and...'"

"Well, one night toward the end of basic training this drill instructor came around and we started talking and it turned out he was going to college studying history...history of everything...of music and art and every kind of history, and that surprised me and then I thought of all those signs I'd seen around the base, and the briefings--so when I came here I headed for the education office."

Variations of these last two "case histories" occurred over and over and point up the momentous effects that superiors can have on the men and women under their jurisdiction when they are sensitive, creative and fortunate enough in their missions to be able to "program" obtainable goals that enhance feelings of confidence and self-worth. Many of their volunteers come into the service with nothing (they think) but a history of failure and fears. Yet we ran into so many success stories at the sites we visited that we feel

they are more than rare occurrences and should reassure Congress that all is not lost when one service or another temporarily fails to make its quota of "volunteers with high school diplomas." One young lieutenant in charge of a group of drill instructors stands out. He has nearly completed his BA and encourages each member of his unit to do likewise (starting at whatever level is appropriate) and they are given release time to do so without (I understand from his superiors) the lessening of the efficiency of the unit in the least.

Question 5: Have you encountered any problems in doing this and what were they?

"Uncertainty of TDYs."

"Lack of time to study."

"Wish we had more time to study on the job when we're not busy."

"Sometimes we simply don't have enough to do and sit around the office for half the day...so I brought in my books and my NCO said not to, it was bad for the morale of the rest of the group! It's o.k. to sit around, drink coffee, read the racing form and BS, but not to try to improve yourself. 'It makes the other guys nervous,' he told me."

"You should have an extra 15 minutes of release time at noon so you can stay and ask the instructor a question. I did once and my boss thought I was goofing off."

"Classes begin too soon (30 minutes) after work. When you've been on a fork-lift for eight hours, you'd like to have a chance to shower and change your clothes before you go to class. Besides, I need the time to change gears from construction to psychology."

"If you don't have a car, and most of the young guys don't, you just can't get to the campus at night even though it's only five miles away. There's no public transportation."

"Public transportation stops at 6:00 p.m., and the campus is 12 miles away and what's worse is that even if you can hitch a ride, the bookstore closes at 5."

The preceding quotations were not chosen for their uniqueness or flavor but to point up a very real problem that some service persons face when they

try to further their formal education part time, without sufficient release time and without the support of their immediate superiors who can make things very difficult, particularly if they see little relevance of the man's studies to the mission of the unit. Fortunately, a greater number of those to whom we spoke reported that their superiors encouraged them in their educational pursuits, rescheduled duty assignments and made allowances for time off, when possible.

Few specific problems tied to specific courses arose in our conversations with students. An exception was brought up by students in both accounting and other math courses including calculus that met for a three-hour session once a week. Being sequential disciplines, such course scheduling served up simply too big a bite for many students, particularly those unlucky enough to miss, or misunderstand, a critical step in the reasoning process. They reported that sometimes there is little time in or after class to clear up problems and put matters aright until another week has elapsed (and another chapter assigned and misunderstood).

Lack of laboratory equipment on base creates problems for some students where biology, chemistry or similar courses are requirements. It may be possible as the program develops to have some kind of portable laboratory unit developed that could be used to meet the most generally required laboratory course. It is obvious, however, that the more esoteric lab courses will remain a problem.

Another problem brought up frequently by students was that of wrestling their transcripts for work completed some time previously from colleges, a few of which have a long history of "serving" the military. ESOs confirmed their complaint:

"They're (the colleges) supposed to have such a fine (computer) system, so up to date...but sometimes these guys have to write three times and we do too and it takes months....In some cases, it has meant a guy actually couldn't take a course (or enroll) because he had no proof of anything. All his records were there."

The comment above points up the need for a repository with fast turn around time. Many ESOs and college advisors strongly suggested that, in addition, a serviceman carry with him a copy of his transcripts with accompanying course descriptions from the appropriate college catalogues. Although copies of transcripts cannot be accepted as official, they can allow colleges to evaluate the student's record and place him in appropriate courses while waiting for his papers to catch up with him.

Question 6: Do you plan to reenlist and/or make the military a career (as appropriate)?

(From younger volunteers)

"Yes, I'm really considering it now and (laughter) I never thought I would. Now I've applied for Bootstrap and that will mean I'll owe the government another hitch, but this education thing really turns me on--and the possibilities afterward. It's o.k. with me."

"Sure, I'll sign on again. After I finish this degree I'd like to be an officer."

(From one 24-year-old, a tenth grade dropout until the SOC program set him on his way.) "Yes, I'm aiming for general."

(From men in their late 20's to early 30's.)

"Yes, I've already signed up for another four years, in order to qualify for additional education benefits. By that time, I'll have 16 years in and might as well go for 20."

"Yes, I intend to stay in as long as I can, even if I go for 30 years and don't get RIFed. I'll be a comparatively young man (48) with half a lifetime left. And what's more, I'll be an educated man who'll have something to offer the civilian world. You know, I think I'd like to teach in elementary school."

These men and still older ones with even more years in uniform summed up the predominant view of the students to whom we spoke. The Armed Forces can offer the best of at least three lives, service to one's country, the development of the self along many dimensions, and the assurance of a secure and productive retirement.

Of all the military students to whom we spoke, only a very few either had not considered or had not decided to remain in the military at least for another few years to take advantage of educational benefits. Of those, several reported they "just weren't the military type" and others were leaving either because they'd "gone about as far as they could go" (were caught in a RIF) or were responding to the pressure of spouses for a "different kind of life." Clearly, the opportunity to further one's education and develop one's skills is a major factor in attracting and holding volunteers.

Question 7: If you were in command (of the post or base or unit, as appropriate) what would you do to make it easier for people like yourself to get the education they want? If you were "running the show," what would you do?

Many of the interviewees' suggestions for improvements in educational opportunities are inherent in their comments presented in other sections of this report. A further, and most important need must now be considered, that for even greater improvement in the dissemination of information about the SOC and SOTA programs and what they can mean to military students. Many, who were attending classes in off-duty hours--on their own, so to speak--were not even aware of the existence of the SOC program and the services and options that it afforded them even though they were attending SOC member colleges. This should not necessarily be taken as a criticism of SOC colleges--for, if

a student arrives on campus to register for a course, the college and his instructors may have no way of identifying the student as "active-military" unless he identifies himself by requesting special payment forms or shows up at the veterans' office or club.

Dissemination of information about educational options should start with informed and honest recruiters. "Some will promise a guy a college degree in no time when they know he is nearly borderline and needs remedial arithmetic and English for a start." It must be publicized in basic training and repeated at every new duty post, to reflect the local options.

There seemed to be wide variations in the procedures used for accomplishing these tasks at the military sites we visited.

At some, each new contingent was lined up in military style and formally briefed by an ESO or career advisor, or by representatives for the local SOC colleges. Sometimes they were lectured by all of these, quite successfully. At others, a "visit" to the base or post education office was merely one of a long series of requirements on an orientation checklist handed out to new recruits to be completed in very short order. This proved to be an almost worthless procedure especially when no simple, eye-catching literature on SOC was prominently displayed.

# III

## THE COLLEGES

> "For Godsake, tell DOD and the Congress, for that matter, if they want an all voluntary force to survive, they'd better support (the concept of) SOC. We've got to be able to deliver what our recruiters promise. And besides, I'm selfish...I want the best for my men... then they give me their best."

> "War is (to the young serviceman) a romantic game of cops and robbers...of cowboys and Indians. Well, now there is no war to fight, thank goodness.... But you have to substitute something for it to use up all that adrenalin and competitiveness or apathy and morale problems set in and then we really aren't prepared to perform our first duty, should an emergency arise....I look upon these educational opportunities as an absolute necessity from my point of view....Besides we're all going to return to civilian life someday. What kind of people will we be; what will we have to offer?"

These commanding officers spoke for a number of their colleagues. One of our strongest impressions was of the commitment to the SOC concept of base commanders and their immediate staffs. Although representatives of some services felt that the SOC program did not go really far enough in fulfilling the needs of their men, their words were strong and clear, "It's a step in the right direction and has high priority on our base or post."

The commitment of the military is understandable, but why do colleges want to become associated with SOC? Is their motivation as straightforward as that of the officers we just quoted? At most of the colleges we visited, we felt this to be so. They were sincerely committed to provide educational opportunities for all persons in their communities who could benefit from them--and active or retired military personnel made up from one-third to slightly more than one-half of their student population well before the advent of SOC. For these institutions, complying with the SOC criteria

presented little or no difficulty. In several cases, no adjustment was required save for the commitment to accept future work from other accredited institutions that met the curricular requirements or array of courses necessary for the degree program agreed upon with the student in a "contract for the degree."

However, the reasons for involvement of the remaining colleges was not so simple. The motivation to join SOC was, for a few--no matter in what terms it was couched--monetary. It is understandable that institutions in financial difficulties because of soaring costs and declining enrollments should seek new clients and sources of revenue. Unfortunately, a number of ESOs felt that a few of these institutions were offering inferior although "accredited" programs on their and other bases and were ripping off the government. "But can you imagine what would happen if I made my feelings known? They'd get right to their congressman, I'd lose my job, and who would gain? This is one reason SOC must have some monitoring system for quality. I don't know how it can be done but somehow...." The very next day I was talking to the field director of a college and he was explaining at length about their rigid criteria for teachers and their stringent methods of quality control on farflung military bases. It was a laudable dissertation but he was interrupted in the middle of his position by a short telephone call after which he called to his assistant and said, "Hey, do we have a body who can teach Psych. 101 and 201 at (a distant base) in 10 days? Well, see if you can turn one up this afternoon. We need him bad." It was hardly a reassuring interview.

At another college I heard the president explain with pride to the chairman of the board of trustees that more than one-half of the funds necessary to retain the central campus came from courses taught at military

installations, a campus few military students ever saw. It seems clear that tremendous differences exist in what the military is getting for its money. This college was paying its faculty well, but not providing counseling or other services as required by the SOC agreement.

Yet other colleges, which also needed funds to stay alive were doing superb jobs in providing all sorts of services on bases--not only to students who had enrolled in their courses, but to many would-be students who came to the education office and who needed a variety of counseling and advising services. In doing so, these college representatives were fulfilling the more generalized function of ESOs or military education advisors, a fortuitous circumstance since some education offices were understaffed or unqualified.

Although colleges are enthusiastic about the SOC concept and want to serve SOC students well, a number do experience difficulty in meeting some of the SOC criteria. It was apparent that in many cases, problems in conforming to SOC criteria can be overcome. One important key to a truly effective SOC program was, we were told, "Put a good high administrator in charge. Don't give SOC to an assistant dean as an ancillary duty."

In one state, the community colleges involved in SOC could not individually modify their residency requirement because of statewide regulation. In an effort to better meet the SOC criteria, the question of residency requirements was raised with the Chancellor. As a result, a committee of presidents was appointed to consider the question for all community colleges, whether involved in SOC or not. It is anticipated that the requirement will be considerably modified to allow much greater flexibility.

In another state, the requirement for 30 resident credits at community colleges made it impossible to meet the SOC criteria. The president considered the problem and concluded that credits for CLEP, military training including

P. E. and USAFI were, in fact, credits awarded by his institution and therefore were to be considered resident credits. As a result, some service personnel have been able to meet the entire residency requirement upon their first registration. A number of others have had the requirement reduced to the point that it was no longer an obstacle.

Acceptance of on-base courses as resident courses seemed to be standard procedure at every institution visited.

Changes in Educational Policy as a Result of SOC Participation

Has the SOC program changed the policies of participating colleges toward nonmilitary students? The answer is yes for the majority of colleges involved in our survey that did not meet SOC standards before the program was initiated. Radical changes were most apparent in the two-year colleges, but this seems a reflection of two factors: a year's experience with the program and a traditional policy of providing educational opportunities for an array of students in the community. Generally, the changes came and continue to come because of a number of factors: the excellent experiences participating colleges have had with active duty military personnel as students, the general boom in the concept of continuing education, and the realization that the service person and his or her dependents are no longer unique in their mobility. In fact, now that one can reenlist and be guaranteed a duty station (barring a national calamity) for several years, military personnel and their families may, in fact, be less mobile than many wage-earners including executives of IBM and their families. Vance Packard's A Nation of Strangers was quoted several times as the eye-opener.

What have these innovations been? The relaxation of residency requirements especially during the latter part of the degree-earning process, the

availability of the contract for the degree option to all students, the acceptance of competencies gained in nontraditional ways (i.e., by studying on one's own or through on-the-job training, etc.) validated by CLEP and institutional challenge exams, and the restructuring of courses away from the traditional 15-week semester to anywhere from three to nine weeks of concentrated work. In addition, weekend or week-long seminars are becoming available.

It seems that students in many civilian circumstances also feel more able and comfortable in committing themselves to work longer hours for a shorter period of time than the arrangement of the traditional academic year makes possible. They can see the "light at the end of the road," which is particularly important to those who are combining study with other career and familial responsibilities.

To sum up, when changes in college policy were necessary in order to meet SOC criteria, they were most easily effected when (a) they had the active and enthusiastic support of the president and highly placed academics, and (b) were presented to the rest of the administration and faculty as a concrete set of proposals that applied to a readily identifiable group of students (i.e., service personnel). When this was so, many of the general arguments and vague defensivenesses that usually accompany yet impede changes in educational policies tended to evaporate. Then, having removed the hurdles for one specific group, it became much easier to allow a broader population access to the track. In some cases, "innovations" required by SOC were applied to nonmilitary as well as to military students simultaneously, in others the liberalization of policies for civilians followed by a year or two. Although we visited a very few colleges where there was as yet no carry-over of any SOC-related policies to them, we were assured that it would come.

IV

THE PROBLEMS

This section is devoted to some of the specific problems that became apparent from talking to ESOs, Servicemen's Counselors, Base Commanders, College Presidents, College Faculty and, most importantly, the Students.

CLEP

CLEP presents particular problems for dealing with both military and civilian students. On the one hand, colleges want to be as generous as they can in awarding credit on this basis because they firmly support CLEP, and, on the other, some feel that awards of credit at the 25th percentile as recommended by the American Council on Education may be too generous. They claim to have "noticed a bimodal distribution in CLEP scores" (from those who squeak by at the 25th percentile to those whose scores are at the 49th percentile or above) and have had "just enough experience" with students who encounter trouble in "sequent courses" to be leery of granting credit for low scores without further "validating" course work.

Military men submitting CLEP scores from examinations taken aboard ship or on small remote bases and posts far removed from an education office have an especially hard time at one college. As one associate dean (retired officer) said, "Those tests aren't too secure and if the C.O. says, 'I want X men to pass it' (and other exams like USAFI), they'll pass. A couple of bright college-educated junior officers will take the guy down to the ward room and give him enough answers to make the grade. I've seen it happen."

There are two complications that arise on occasion for both military and civilian students seeking credit through CLEP: Some state institutions are prohibited from granting awards of credit for less than the 50th percentile,

and other junior and community colleges are fearful that if they do, the student's academic transcript will be called into question when he tries to transfer to a four-year college. Happily, for most four-year institutions, the problem does not exist; whatever cut-off score that was used by a junior college is honored as long as the candidate for admission has fulfilled all other requirements for the A.A./A.S. degree.

Institutional acceptance of CLEP over locally generated "challenge exams" is gaining strength rapidly. Interviewees at a number of colleges told us that they looked forward to expanded CLEP offerings and the new norming study that would help them in reassessing their policies.

One problem remains to be solved. Some institutions make money when a student opts for an institutional exam rather than CLEP. If he fails the former, he will already be enrolled in the course; if he passes, his "place" is still paid for. It is a great temptation for colleges to push local institutional examinations when they may be eligible for state funds for one procedure but not for the other.

In general, institutions visited were accepting CLEP with little trouble, although some differences in the score level for which credit will be granted are likely to remain.

Contract for Degree

Of all the SOC criteria, the contract for the degree was the one with which colleges had had the least experience. Some had had no one ask for a contract, and were not precisely sure how they would handle requests when they arose. At those colleges that had drawn up contracts, we found that the documents were simply traditional course-of-study plans listing the distribution requirements and courses in the area of concentration or major which,

when completed at that or any other accrediting institution, would net the student a degree from the college holding the contract. Although this indeed is a contract, it lacks the nontraditional flavor espoused by John Valley in Nontraditional Study:

> "A contract typically will cover the student's objectives, how the student proposes to obtain his objectives, the educational resources required, how and when they will be used. Further, a contract indicates the bases on which the student's performance will be evaluated; the evidence to be submitted to demonstrate that the learning goals have been attained. It is this aspect of the contract learning system together with its stress on behavioral statements of learning objectives that helps to relate external degree programs to the theme of competence."

At two colleges there were efforts to make manifest Valley's more expanded and flexible interpretation of the concept a reality, but it will be some time before the outcomes will be known.

There is a variability in the cost of a "degree by contract" for students depending on the college involved; there is also variability in the number of years such a contract is assumed to be in force. At some institutions there is only a single charge of from $15 to $25 which is considered a registration fee and includes the cost of the initial evaluation of his academic status, counseling and the laying out of the additional requirements necessary for the degree. Other institutions require a yearly payment (usually $25) on the part of the student in order for the contract to remain in force. And while some institutions consider five years to be the standard length of their commitment to the service person, others consider it to be 10 years or "perpetuity."

There is another possible hitch that the "contract student" may encounter at some SOC colleges, particularly if he is slow in fulfilling his part of the contract and fails to keep in close contact with his advisor. If the requirements (either departmental or institutional) for his particular degree

have been altered or amended between the time of the signing of the contract and the time he presents himself for the degree, he will be responsible for fulfilling these "new" requirements. For this reason, we think contract students should be urged to keep in close touch with their SOC advisors and write to them every six months or so whether or not they are currently enrolled in courses. It is imperative that they advise the SOC counselor of every change of address, for some SOC colleges are planning to contact their students periodically to keep them up to date and to offer encouraging words. They need to know where students are!

For the military person about to reenter civilian life there is yet another wrinkle he may encounter in the contract for the degree. Although the majority of SOC colleges treat active and nonactive military personnel alike, a few make a distinction between them and the contract is no longer valid where a person changes his status. This leads to the reimposing of residency requirements on the veteran. "After all, most of them retire here anyway." The program is too new to assess how much hardship, if any, will be imposed on veterans who wish to continue their formal education, but it does seem as if this is another area in which some kind of monitoring of the "spirit of the law" is indicated.

All in all, the concept of a contract for degree needs further definition and trial before it can be considered a viable part of the SOC program.

Credit Depository

> "I had a year of college when I came in, in 1954, and it seems I've been taking courses somewhere off and on ever since. Gee,--for almost twenty years. I had courses in psychology and literature in Germany and history and art [illegible]man, took everything that was offered in Korea and correspond[illegible]ourses from _____ U. in Nam. Then I have all those cours[illegible]lated to my MOS and USAFI courses! One counselor said it looked as if I had about 160

college credits. But still no degree....So now I'm enrolled at _____ and finishing it up. They gave me credit for only two years (60 credits) but what the hell...."

"I graduated from a German gymnasium before I immigrated to the States and (upon entering the service) started taking college courses wherever I was stationed. I even took two courses in Turkey and I was only there six months.... But with all the moves and all the colleges (that sponsored the courses)--I just don't have all the papers to prove it. Sometimes I moved out the day after a course ended and the papers never did catch up. And I can't get records from East Germany. The school doesn't exist anymore so I was rather up a creek as far as proving anything. CLEP and local challenge exams did help some (in validating previous work) but CLEP isn't available for all the subjects I've taken and departments vary in their policies toward challenge exams.... Also, at two colleges in the area, you had to enroll and pay for the courses before they'd let you take challenge exams. It's a mess."

"If I wrote (for transcripts) to all 'the colleges I'd attended', I'd have to write to twenty and it's too much of a hassle. Thinking back I'm not sure I even remember what college offered what course on each base. Wouldn't you think there'd be some easier way to pull it all together?"

The difficulties of "pulling it together" was a theme we heard over and over in our interviews with military personnel, particularly those with long years of service who were now faced with the necessity of acquiring a degree for retention and advancement, or getting caught in a RIF. They had not been educationally idle during their military careers, indeed, many had taken courses at nearby colleges on their own without any tuition assistance. But, when the time came to validate their endeavors, there were problems.

Most of these problems could be solved by the formation of an intra-service central depository for educational records where educational credentials of all sorts could be stored and <u>quickly</u> and <u>easily</u> retrieved throughout one's military career, or for a lifetime if necessary. The system could be modeled to yield what John Summerskill described as an Educational Passport at the 1974 annual meeting of the American Association of Higher Education. According to Summerskill--

"The Passport

The passport itself is nothing but a single 5" x 5" sheet microfiche in an appropriate envelope or folder. The microfiche is durable, inexpensive, and easily read and copied. On the sheet of microfiche, in photographically reduced form, are all those things about one's educational progress which one might want to keep and present, for example, high school grades, recommendations from teachers, scores, college grades, instructors' comments, narrative testimonies, summaries of special projects or special training, outcomes of experimental learning, personal statements of accomplishments and so on. The student can include in the passport what he chooses and, indeed, a student can construct his own passport if he chooses.

"In practice, regional and national educational agencies which have trained personnel and equipment will, in all likelihood, prepare passports in behalf of students and update passports at the request of students. When a student wants to enroll in an educational program he will simply present his passport to the educational institution where credentials can be reviewed on the spot using an inexpensive microfiche viewer. An index will help the institution get to categories of information in the passport which are of special interest. If the institution wants a basic, permanent record for the student who is admitted (or employed) this can be supplied, at the student's request, by the agency which issued the passport."

Proliferation of Offerings and Resultant Confusion

On several of the larger bases we visited, courses were being offered by close to a dozen colleges and universities with widely differing educational policies including those relating to transferable credits, requirements for a degree, and the related expenditures in time and money for achieving them. In several cases we found that similar courses were being offered at the same time by two colleges to military personnel, one costing more than 10 times the other! Then, too, prospective students are contacted by representatives of proprietary correspondence schools who sometimes make persuasive cases for their programs costing hundreds of dollars. The educationally unsophisticated or more often the simply uninformed who signed up for them often did not realize that the same training was being offered by a SOC college

nearby. In two instances men signed up for a vocational correspondence course costing in excess of $1000 when a community college was offering a "superior course" on the post for a registration fee of $5.50.

The proliferation of educational offerings available at military installations is to be welcomed so long as there are safeguards that it results in something more than added confusion for ESOs and students alike. Some ESOs have not had sufficient experience with higher education to guide students wisely in their choices, others are simply overworked. Prospective students, particularly those with no previous college experience, are often the losers. Colleges and proprietary schools should be required to do more than present their accreditation credentials and approval for veterans' funds before they are permitted to service a military installation.

# V

## SUMMARY

As a result of our visits, we feel very strongly that the SOC program is worthy of continued and, hopefully, increased support. However, there are problems and some method must be worked out to monitor the activities of participating colleges in order to assure their compliance with both the letter and spirit of the SOC agreement. It is imperative that such a monitoring system include procedures to insure quality control of teaching and advising. Such a system should include periodic visits to class sessions and talks with representatives of education offices, colleges and the students themselves. During our visits of several days to each site, we gained many insights and awarenesses that would never have come to light had we limited our focus to one group or another. It was often the opportunity to check information gathered from one source which seemed incomplete or confusing to us with another source within a very short time that made it possible to untangle some complex realities. Mailed surveys will never be enough.

As one base commanding officer said,

> "By God, I'm glad they sent somebody out from Washington to talk to the people a program is supposed to serve.... This is the first time it has happened.... Usually they either send a questionnaire or else call the directors and supervisors together for a conference and they sit around and try to impress one another."

His feelings were echoed by the military education officer at another base who paraphrased a fragment from Harry Truman's memoirs when we talked about evaluation. "He said something about if you wanted to know how a building was going up and when it would be finished, you never asked the contractor or the superintendent but the workmen eating lunch."

SOC, or something similar, is a necessity if servicemen and women are to realize their goals for personal and professional growth. We know it has already done this for many who are grateful to both their colleges and their branches of the Armed Forces for making it possible.

# Appendix

## Site Visits

### Military Installations

Fort Bliss, Texas
Fort Eustice, Virginia
Fort Meade, Maryland
Fort Ord, California
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, California
McDill Air Force Base, Florida
Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia
Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida
San Diego Naval Air Station, California
Vandenburg Air Force Base, California

### Four-Year Colleges

Chapman College, California
Golden Gate University, California
Hampton Institute, Virginia
New Mexico State University, New Mexico
University of Maryland, Maryland
University of San Diego, California
University of South Florida, Florida
University of West Florida, Florida

### Two-Year Colleges

Allen Hancock Community College, California
Ann Arundel Community College, Maryland
El Paso Community College, Texas
Hillsborough Community College, Florida
Monterey Peninsula College, California
Pensacola Junior College, Florida
Thomas Nelson Community College, Virginia